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New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 37

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19, A/67/L.20 and A/67/L.28)

The President: At the request of the sponsors and in view of the presence of the President of the Palestinian Authority, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, I should like to advise members that the Assembly will first take action on draft resolution A/67/L.28, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". The Assembly will then continue to hold its debate on agenda item 37 immediately following its consideration of the draft resolution.

In the light of that circumstance, and there being no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.28.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the honour, as Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan and Chairman of the Group of Arab Ambassadors at the United Nations, to welcome the sincere children of Palestine present here, who have displayed patience, steadfastness and good faith, demonstrating that they are excellent champions of the Palestinian cause. I especially welcome President Abbas, Abu Mazen, our brother the leader. I welcome his delegation to this historic meeting on this historic day.

I also have the honour and the pleasure of introducing the draft resolution entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations", as contained in document A/67/L.28, under agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine". I introduce the draft resolution on behalf of the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, China, Comoros, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe and Palestine.

This important draft resolution aims to take a historic decision to grant Palestine the status of a non-member observer State. Its preambular part reaffirms the unacceptability of the acquisition of territory by force, as stipulated in the Charter. Other preambular paragraphs reaffirm the right of the

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Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to an independent State of Palestine.

The preambular paragraphs reaffirm relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions concerning the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, mentioning, among other things, that Israel must withdraw from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, starting with the right to self-determination and the right to establish an independent State, must be realized, along with an equitable settlement for the Palestinian refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III) and a complete cessation of Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The preambular part further recalls resolution 43/177, in which the Assembly acknowledged the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988. It also reaffirms the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders and the right of both States to live side by side in peace and security.

In its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence in their State of Palestine on the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

We call on the General Assembly to grant Palestine the status of a non-member observer State. I will repeat that. We are asking the General Assembly to accord Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, without prejudging the rights, privileges and role accorded the Palestine Liberation Organization as representative of the Palestinian people.

The operative paragraphs also affirm the determination of the General Assembly to contribute to the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the attainment of a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict that ends the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, making possible the realization of the vision of two States. They also express the urgent need to resume and expedite negotiations in order to achieve a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive solution.

Paragraph 6 urges all States and the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to continue to support the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination, independence and freedom. Those are all principles that have been enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. On this historic date, those principles will be enshrined.

The draft resolution before the Assembly today, which will make this body's views official, has been a long time in coming. Sixty-five years ago today, when the United Nations decided to partition historic Palestine into two States, one acquired independence, but the other one waited until this historic day. The eyes of all the children of Palestine are looking to this moment and to this Assembly to see their aspirations and hopes fully realized.

Since that day 65 years ago, the General Assembly has annually adopted many important resolutions reaffirming the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, as well as the need to achieve a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine under resolutions of international legitimacy. In that respect, the draft resolution is a qualitative addition along the path to achieving the international will to establish a real peace in the Middle East based on the two-State solution. That is why I call upon all States to contribute today to making history and to pave the way to the future by voting for the draft resolution.

To conclude, I can only express, on behalf of the Arab Group, our great gratitude and appreciation to all the States that have sponsored the draft resolution, thereby demonstrating their support for the principles of the Charter. This is a victory for the values of justice and truth and for the Palestinian question and the Palestinian people, who are watching us today.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Abbas (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Palestine comes today to the General Assembly at a time when it is still tending to its wounds and burying its beloved martyrs — the men, women and children who fell victim to the latest Israeli aggression — a time when it is still searching for remnants of life amid the ruins of homes destroyed by Israeli bombs on the Gaza Strip, wiping out entire families, their men, women and children, all murdered along with their dreams, their hopes, their

future and their longing to live an ordinary life and to live in freedom and peace.

Palestine comes today to the General Assembly because it believes in peace and because its people, as proven in the course of the past few days, are in desperate need of it.

Palestine comes today to this prestigious international forum, the representative and protector of international legitimacy, reaffirming our conviction that the international community now stands before the last chance to save the two-State solution. Palestine comes to the Assembly today at a defining moment regionally and internationally, in order to reaffirm its presence and to protect the possibilities and the foundations of the just peace that is deeply hoped for in our region.

The Israeli aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip has confirmed once again the extraordinary, urgent and pressing need to end the Israeli occupation and for our people to gain their freedom and independence. That aggression also confirms the Israeli Government's adherence to the policy of occupation, brute force and war, which in turn obliges the international community to shoulder its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and towards peace. That is why we are here today.

I say with great pain and sorrow that there was assuredly no one in the world who asked dozens of Palestinian children to lose their lives in order to reaffirm the aforementioned facts. There did not have to be thousands of deadly raids and tons of explosives for the world to be reminded that there was an occupation that needed to end and that there was a people that needed to be freed. Nor was there a need for a new, devastating war in order for us to be aware of the absence of peace. That is why we are here today.

The Palestinian people miraculously recovered from the ashes of Al-Nakba of 1948, which was intended to extinguish their being and to expel them, to uproot them and erase their presence, which was rooted in the depths of their land and the depths of history. In those dark days, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were torn from their homes and displaced within and outside their homeland. As part of one of the most dreadful campaigns of ethnic cleansing and dispossession in modern history, they were thrown from their beautiful, embracing, prosperous country into refugee camps.

In those dark days, our people looked to the United Nations as a beacon of hope and appealed for an end to the injustice, for justice and peace and for the realization of our rights. Our people still believe in those aims and continue to wait. That is why we are here today.

In the course of our long national struggle, our people have always strived to ensure harmony and consistency among the goals and means of their struggle, international law and the spirit of the era, in accordance with the prevailing realities and changes. Despite the horrors that befell them, and continue to befall them today, as a consequence of Al-Nakba and its horrors, our people have always strived not to lose their humanity, their highest and deeply held moral values and their innovative ability for survival, steadfastness, creativity and hope. Despite the enormity and complexity of that task, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the committed leader of their revolution and struggle, has consistently strived to achieve that harmony and consistency.

In 1988, when the Palestine National Council decided to pursue the Palestinian peace initiative and adopted the declaration of independence, on the basis of resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, under the leadership of the late President Yasser Arafat, it in fact took a historic, difficult and courageous decision that defined the requirements for a historic reconciliation that would turn the page on war, aggression and occupation. That was no easy matter. Yet, we had the courage and sense of responsibility to take the right decision in order to protect the higher national interests of our people and to affirm our adherence to and conformity with international legitimacy. In that same year, that decision was welcomed, supported and endorsed by the Assembly that is meeting today.

Over the past months in particular, we and the members of the General Assembly have heard a constant stream of Israeli threats in response to our peaceful, political and diplomatic effort for Palestine to acquire non-member observer status in the United Nations. Members have certainly witnessed how some of those threats were barbarically and horrifically carried out in the Gaza Strip only days ago.

We have not heard a word from any Israeli official expressing any sincere concern about saving the peace process. On the contrary, our people have witnessed, and continue to witness, an unprecedented escalation of military attacks, the blockade, settlement activities

and ethnic cleansing, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem. They have seen mass arrests and attacks by settlers, as well as other practices with which the Israeli occupation is becoming synonymous. Israel's apartheid system of colonial occupation institutionalizes the plague of racism and entrenches hatred and incitement.

The Israeli Government's conviction that it is above international law and that it is immune from accountability and responsibility allows it to blatantly continue its aggressive policies and perpetration of war crimes. Unfortunately, that belief is bolstered by the failure of some to condemn and to demand the cessation of those violations and crimes and by positions that equate the victim and the perpetrator. The time has come for the world to say clearly enough aggression, enough settlements and enough occupation. That is why we are here now.

We have not come here seeking to delegitimize a State established decades ago, that is, Israel. Rather, we have come to affirm the legitimacy of a State that must now achieve its independence, namely, Palestine. We have not come here to add further complications to the peace process, which Israel's policies have cast into disarray. Rather, we have come to launch a final serious attempt to achieve peace. We seek not to put an end to what remains of the negotiations process, which has lost its utility and credibility, but rather to try to breathe new life into the negotiations. We seek to ensure a solid foundation for that process, on the basis of the terms of reference of the relevant international resolutions, so that the negotiations can succeed.

On behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I say that we will not give up, we will not tire and our determination will not wane. We will continue to strive to achieve a just peace. However, above all, I affirm that our people will not relinquish their inalienable national rights, as defined by United Nations resolutions. Our people cling to the right to defend themselves against aggression and occupation. They will continue their popular and peaceful resistance and their historic resolve and will to build their land. They will end the hateful division and strengthen their national unity. We will accept no less than the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on all the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, as well as a solution to the refugee issue on the basis of resolution 194 (III), in line with the operative part of the Arab Peace Initiative.

I do not believe that this is some kind of terrorism that we pursue in the United Nations. Nevertheless, in that connection, we once again reiterate the warning that the window of opportunity is narrowing and that time will soon run out. Patience is wearing thin and hope is withering. The innocent lives that have been taken by Israeli bombs — amounting to more than 168 martyrs, mostly children and women, including 12 members of the Dalou family in Gaza — are a painful reminder to the world that the racist and colonial occupation is making the two-State solution, and the prospect for realizing peace, a very difficult, if not an impossible, choice. It is time for action and the moment to move forward. That is why we are here today.

The world is being asked today to answer a specific question that we have often repeated: is there a surplus of people in our region? Tell us. The world must say whether we are a surplus people or whether there is a State missing, which must be established on its land, that is, in Palestine. The world is being asked to take a significant step in the process of rectifying the unprecedented historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people since Al-Nakba of 1948.

Every vote in the Assembly supporting our endeavour today is a most valuable voice of courage, and every State that grants support today to Palestine's request for non-member observer State status is affirming its principled and moral support for freedom, the rights of peoples, international law and peace. The Assembly's support for our endeavour today will send a promising message to millions of Palestinians in the land of Palestine and in the refugee camps both in the homeland and throughout the diaspora and to the prisoners struggling for freedom in Israel's prisons that justice is possible and that there is a reason to be hopeful, and that the peoples of the world do not accept the continuation of the occupation. That is why we are here today.

The support of the Assembly for our endeavour today will give a reason for hope to a people besieged by a racist, colonial occupation. Unfortunately, failure in this endeavour would almost amount to complicity in Israel's aggression and in a state of paralysis that some are striving to impose on the will of the international community. The Assembly's support will confirm to our people that they are not alone and that their wager on international law will never be a losing proposition.

In our endeavour today to acquire non-member observer status for Palestine in the United Nations,

we reaffirm that Palestine will always adhere to and respect the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, uphold equality, guarantee civil liberties, uphold the rule of law, promote democracy and pluralism, and uphold and protect the rights of women. That is what we are pledging today. As we promised our friends and our brothers and sisters, we will continue to consult with them upon the approval of our request to upgrade Palestine's status by this body. We will act responsibly and positively in our next steps, and we will work to strengthen cooperation with the countries and peoples of the world for the sake of a just peace.

Sixty-five years ago on this day, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the land of historic Palestine into two States and became the birth certificate for Israel. Sixty-five years later and on the same day, which this body has designated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the General Assembly stands before a moral duty, which it must not hesitate to undertake; before an historic duty, which cannot endure further delay; and before a practical duty to salvage the chances for peace, which is urgent and cannot be postponed.

The General Assembly is called upon today to issue a birth certificate to the reality of the State of Palestine. That is specifically why we are here today. Our hope is in God and in the General Assembly. May peace be upon the Assembly.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Today I stand before the Assembly, tall and proud, because I represent the world's one and only Jewish State, a State built in the Jewish people's ancient homeland, with its eternal capital, Jerusalem, as its beating heart. We are a nation with deep roots in the past and bright hopes for the future. We are a nation that values idealism but acts with pragmatism. Israel is a nation that never hesitates to defend itself, but will always, always extend its hand for peace.

Peace is a central value of Israeli society. The Bible calls on us and says "Seek peace and pursue it". Peace fills our art and poetry. It is taught in our schools. It has been the goal of the Israeli people and every Israeli leader since Israel was re-established 64 years ago. Israel's declaration of independence states:

> "We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help".

This week was the thirty-fifth anniversary of President Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem. In a speech just before the visit, President Sadat famously stood in the Egyptian Parliament in Cairo and stated that he would go "to the ends of the Earth" to make peace with Israel. Israel's Prime Minister at the time, Menachem Begin, welcomed President Sadat to Israel and paved the way for peace. This morning, Prime Minister Netanyahu stood at the Menachem Begin Center and said this about the draft resolution on which the General Assembly is about to vote:

> "Israel is prepared to live in peace with a Palestinian State, but for peace to endure, Israel's security must be protected. The Palestinians must recognize the Jewish State and they must be prepared to end the conflict with Israel once and for all. None of these vital interests, these vital interests of peace, none of them appear in the draft resolution that will be put forward before the General Assembly today, and that is why Israel cannot accept it. The only way to achieve peace is through agreements that are reached by the parties and not through United Nations resolutions that completely ignore Israel's vital security and national interests. And because this resolution is so one-sided, it doesn't advance peace; it pushes it backwards.
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> "As for the rights of Jewish people in this land, I have a simple message for those people gathered in the General Assembly today: no decision by the United Nations can break the 4,000 year-old bond between the people of Israel and the land of Israel."

The people of Israel wait for a Palestinian leader who is willing to follow in the footsteps of President Sadat. The world waits for President Abbas to speak the truth that peace can be achieved only through negotiations by recognizing Israel as a Jewish State. It waits for him to tell them that peace must also address Israel's security needs and end the conflict once and for all. For as long as President Abbas prefers symbolism over reality, as long as he prefers to travel to New York for United Nations resolutions, rather than to Jerusalem for genuine dialogue, any hope of peace will be out of reach.

Israel has always extended its hand in peace and will always extend its hand for peace. When we faced

an Arab leader who wanted peace, we made peace. That was the case with Egypt, and that was the case with Jordan. Time and again, we have sought peace with the Palestinians. Time and again, we have been met by rejection of our offers, denial of our rights and terrorism targeting our citizens.

President Abbas described today's proceedings as historic, but the only historic thing about his speech was how much it ignored history.

The truth is that 65 years ago today, the United Nations voted to partition the British Mandate into two States: a Jewish State and an Arab State. Two States for two peoples. Israel accepted that plan. The Palestinians and Arab nations around us rejected it and launched a war of annihilation to throw the Jews into the sea.

The truth is that from 1948 until 1967 the West Bank was ruled by Jordan and Gaza was ruled by Egypt. The Arab States did not lift a finger to create a Palestinian State. Instead, they sought Israel's destruction and were joined by newly formed Palestinian terrorist organizations.

The truth is that at Camp David in 2000, and again at Annapolis in 2008, Israeli leaders made far-reaching offers for peace. Those offers were met by rejection, evasion and even terrorism. The truth is that to advance peace, in 2005 Israel dismantled entire communities and uprooted thousands of people from their homes in the Gaza Strip. And rather than use that opportunity to build a peaceful future, the Palestinians turned Gaza into an Iranian terror base, from which thousands of rockets were fired into Israeli cities. As we were reminded just last week, the area has been turned into a launching pad for rockets into Israeli cities, a haven for global terrorists and an ammunition dump for Iranian weapons.

Time after time, the Palestinian leadership has refused to accept responsibility. They have refused to make the tough decisions for peace.

Israel remains committed to peace, but we will not establish another Iranian terror base in the heart of our country. We need a peace that will endure, a peace that will secure the future of Israel.

Three months ago, Israel's Prime Minister stood in this very Hall, at this very rostrum (see A/67/PV.12), and extended his hand in peace to President Abbas. He reiterated that his goal was to create a solution of two States for two peoples, where a demilitarized Palestinian State would recognize Israel as a Jewish State. That is right — two States for two peoples.

In fact, I did not hear President Abbas use the phrase "two States for two peoples" this afternoon. In fact, I have never heard him say the phrase "two States for two peoples", because the Palestinian leadership has never recognized that Israel is the nation State of the Jewish people. They have never been willing to accept what this very body recognized 65 years ago — Israel is the Jewish State. In fact, today he asked the world to recognize a Palestinian State, but he still refused to recognize the Jewish State. Not only does he not recognize the Jewish State, he is also trying to erase Jewish history. This year, he even tried to erase the connection between the Jewish people and Jerusalem. He said that Jews were trying to alter the historical character of Jerusalem. He said that we are trying to "Judaize Jerusalem".

I would like to say to President Abbas that the truth is that Jerusalem had a Jewish character long before most cities in the world had any character. Three thousand years ago, King David ruled from Jerusalem, and Jews have lived in Jerusalem ever since.

It is time that President Abbas, instead of revising history, started making history by making peace with Israel.

This draft resolution (A/67/L.28) will not advance peace. This draft resolution will not change the situation on the ground. It will not change the fact that the Palestinian Authority has no control over Gaza — and that is 40 per cent of the territory they claim to represent. President Abbas cannot even visit nearly half the territory of the State he claims to represent. That territory is controlled by Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization that rains missiles on Israeli civilians. That is the same Hamas that fired more than 1,300 rockets into the heart of Israel's major cities this month.

This draft resolution will not confer statehood on the Palestinian Authority, which clearly fails to meet the criteria for statehood. This draft resolution will not enable the Palestinian Authority to join international treaties, organizations or conferences as a State. This draft resolution cannot serve as acceptable terms of reference for peace negotiations with Israel because it says nothing about Israel's security needs. It does not call on the Palestinians to recognize Israel as the Jewish

State, and it does not demand an end to the conflict and a termination of all claims.

Let me tell the Assembly what this draft resolution does do. This draft resolution violates fundamental binding commitments, including a commitment that many of the States represented here today in this Hall were themselves witness to — a commitment that all outstanding issues in the peace process would be resolved only in direct negotiations. The draft resolution sends a message that the international community is willing to turn a blind eye to peace agreements.

For the people of Israel, it raises a simple question: Why continue to make painful sacrifices for peace in exchange for pieces of paper that the other side will not honour? It will make a negotiated peace settlement less likely, as Palestinians continue to harden their positions and place further obstacles and preconditions to negotiations and peace. And, unfortunately, it will raise expectations that cannot be met, which has always proven to be a recipe for conflict and instability.

There is only one route to Palestinian statehood, and that route does not run through this Hall in New York. That route runs through direct negotiations between Jerusalem and Ramallah that will lead to a secure and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. There are no shortcuts, no quick fixes and no instant solutions. As President Obama said in 2010, "Peace cannot be imposed from the outside".

The real message of this draft resolution for the people of Israel is that the international community will turn a blind eye to violations of these agreements by the Palestinians.

In submitting this draft resolution, the Palestinian leadership is once again making the wrong choice. Sixty-five years ago, Palestinians could have chosen to live side by side with the Jewish State of Israel. Sixty-five years ago, they could have chosen to accept the solution of two States for two peoples. They rejected it then, and they are rejecting it again today.

The international community should not encourage that rejection. It should not encourage the Palestinian leadership to drive forward recklessly with both feet pressing down on the gas, no hands on the wheel and no eyes on the road. Instead, it should encourage the Palestinians to enter into direct negotiations without preconditions in order to achieve an historic peace in which a demilitarized Palestinian State recognizes the Jewish State.

Winston Churchill said, "The truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it, ignorance may deride it, malice may distort it, but there it is". The truth is that Israel wants peace, and the Palestinians are avoiding peace.

Those who are supporting the draft resolution today are not advancing peace; they are undermining peace. The United Nations was founded to advance the cause of peace. Today the Palestinians are turning their back on peace. Let not history record that today the United Nations helped them along on their march of folly.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): The time has come. The time has come for the international community to set things right. No longer can the world turn a blind eye to the long sufferings of the Palestinian people, the denial of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and the obstruction of their rights to self-determination and to independence. No longer can the world deny the fact that despite the enormous barriers erected by the occupying Power, Palestinians have diligently and with great resolve built the capacity to function as a State ready to stand equal to any other State in this Assembly and ready to unleash its full potential as a positive force for progress.

There can be no reason, therefore, why the international community cannot endorse the request to accord non-member observer State status to Palestine, an entity that some 24 years ago the Assembly, through its resolution 43/177, acknowledged as a State. Indonesia is therefore a sponsor of the draft resolution before the Assembly (A/67/L.28), and we reiterate the hope that Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations will be favourably considered. We hold that Palestine's full membership is consistent with the shared vision of a two-State solution. We believe that an independent State of Palestine, with equal rights and, indeed, responsibilities equal to those of other States, will contribute to the attainment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The recent cycle of indiscriminate violence and disproportionate use of force in Gaza, Palestine, serves as a serious reminder of the need for an earnest resumption and acceleration of the peace process and thus of the need to create conditions conducive to that process. That means ending illegal settlement activities and lifting the blockade of Gaza, thereby putting to an end the inhumane policy of collective punishment. There is a need, too, for Palestine to enhance intra-Palestinian dialogue at this very historic moment.

By according non-member observer State status to the State of Palestine, we are signaling the primacy of diplomacy and the rejection of violence. We are making a strong statement on the need for mutual respect among nations. We are placing faith in the principle of universality of membership of the United Nations. We are beginning to redress a festering historic injustice, and we are affirm that all of humankind, including the long-suffering people of Palestine, are entitled to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Baird (Canada): Canada opposes draft resolution A/67/L.28 in the strongest of terms because it undermines the core foundations of a decades-long commitment on the part of the international community and the parties themselves to a two-State solution, arrived at through direct negotiations.

While we understand that a final resolution remains elusive, Canada has long opposed unilateral actions by either side, as they are unhelpful. The outstanding issues are too intricate and too complex to be resolved by simplistic unilateral measures. We do not believe that unilateral measures taken by one side can be justified by accusations of unilateralism directed at the other. That approach can only result in the steady erosion and collapse of the very foundations of a process that, while incomplete, holds the only realistic chance of bringing about two peaceful, prosperous States living side by side as neighbours.

Canada's support for a negotiated settlement, like our opposition to the initiative before us today, is rooted in the very history of this venerable Organization and in the sustained international effort to resolve this matter. Canada was proud to be one of the countries preparing the blueprint for peace as part of the 1947 United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. That Committee came up with the proposal for a two-State solution — one predominantly Jewish and the other predominantly Arab, living side by side — that ultimately resulted, in November 1947, in the passage of resolution 181 (II) setting out the Partition Plan. However, not all of those who should have supported that vision were prepared to do so, and the people of the region have suffered for seven decades as a result.

Even in those early, difficult days, however, the principle of collaboration between the two parties was seen as an inherent necessity, as reflected in the elaboration of a plan for economic union between the two sides. While resolution 181 (II) has never been fully implemented, the principle — the idea that the two parties need to work together to achieve their mutual and intertwined destinies and potential — has survived as an essential ingredient in successive efforts to find an elusive peace.

In 1948, resolution 194 (III) set up a Conciliation Commission aimed at finding solutions to the full range of problems facing the two sides. It established an important principle in calling for the parties involved to seek agreement through negotiations, with a view to the final settlement of all questions outstanding between them.

In 1967, the Security Council adopted resolution 242 (1967). The Council requested the dispatch of a special representative of the Secretary-General to the region to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement, entrenching further the principle that solutions required the acceptance and collective action of both sides. That idea was reaffirmed in 1973 in Council resolution 338 (1973), which decided that immediately and concurrently with the ceasefire, negotiations should start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace.

Those two Security Council resolutions, 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), form the explicitly recognized cornerstone of all subsequent peace commitments, accords and understandings between the two parties, enshrining the need for negotiations as a core principle.

Both the Israelis and the Palestinians reaffirmed their acceptance of the principles and obligations laid out in both resolutions in 1993, with the historic signing of the Oslo Accords. Article I made the point explicitly in highlighting that the interim arrangements are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1993).

In 1995, the Oslo II agreement built on those important foundations. In the preamble, both sides reaffirmed their desire to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process. Final clause 7, under article XXXI, stipulated that neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.

Those principles were again reaffirmed in 2002. Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) called on

the Israeli and Palestinian sides and their leaders to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and Mitchell Report recommendations with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement. It also offered support to the Secretary-General and others in their efforts to resume the peace process.

The following year, 2003, the Middle East Quartet was established. It developed the road map, which was a performance-based, goal-driven plan covering peace, security and humanitarian areas. Its approach and directions were based explicitly on the principles contained in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). A key element of the Quartet principles contained in the road map was that a clear, unambiguous acceptance by both parties of the goal of a negotiated settlement was needed to reach the destination. It goes on to underscore that a settlement negotiated between the parties will result in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. The Quartet road map requires, by its very nature, a collaborative effort explicitly requiring reciprocal steps by the two sides.

Later that year, Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) formally endorsed the Quartet road map, while calling on the parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map in cooperation with the Quartet and to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Resolution 1850 (2008) underscored the Council's explicit support for the negotiations undertaken in Annapolis in 2007 and its commitment to the irreversibility of the bilateral negotiations. That resolution reaffirmed international support for the Quartet principles and supported the determination of both parties to reach their goal of concluding a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, without exception. It also called on both sides to refrain from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations.

Successive Security Council resolutions and various international commitments and understandings over nearly seven decades have formed the building blocks of a collaborative peace process that remains unfinished. The path to peace has historically rested in direct negotiations between the two parties to resolve the outstanding issues, and it remains the same today. Solutions can come only through the two sides working together.

The draft resolution before us will not advance the cause of peace or spur a return to negotiations. Will the Palestinian people be better off as a result? No. On the contrary, this unilateral step will harden positions and raise unrealistic expectations while doing nothing to improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

Canada is committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, whereby two States live side by side in peace, security and prosperity. Any two-State solution must be negotiated between and mutually agreed upon by both sides. Any unilateral action, by either side, outside of the bilateral framework outlined above is ultimately unhelpful.

Canada has long supported efforts to bring the two sides to the bargaining table to resolve all outstanding issues, and we remain committed to that objective today. But we cannot support an initiative that we are firmly convinced will undermine the objective of reaching a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement for both sides. It is for those reasons that Canada is voting against the draft resolution. As a result of this body's utterly regrettable decision to abandon policy and principle, we will be considering all available next steps.

We call on both sides to return to the negotiating table without preconditions. Canada will be there to offer its good offices and full support.

Mr. Davutoğlu (Turkey): In Turkish we have a saying: "One who closes his eyes only makes himself a night". For 65 years, the whole world has shut its eyes to the plight of the Palestinian people. For many decades, we closed our eyes to the right of Palestinian people to their State. And for 65 years, no resolution adopted by this body supporting a Palestinian State has been honoured.

However, no one can wash away the sorrow of the Palestinian people by just closing his eyes. The reality of Palestine is simple, yet harsh. It is on the streets of Gaza, where thousands of people suffer an inhumane blockade in an open prison. It is on the streets of the West Bank, where people have to go through checkpoints on nearly every corner. It is in the heart of the Palestinian people, who have been subjected to exiles, massacres, wars, collective punishment and blockades for many decades. The reality of Palestine is a bleeding wound in the conscience of all humanity — of all of us.

I personally witnessed that reality when I recently visited Gaza with a group of Arab ministers at the height of the recent crisis. In Shifa hospital, in Gaza, I came across a father — Basil Asheva — who had lost his daughter Yusha a moment earlier, during the bombardment that also left his wife severely wounded. Leaning his head on my chest to seek some relief, he had no words, only tears, to tell of his family's tragedy. His tears reflected not only his personal sorrow, but also the tragedy of the whole Palestinian nation, desperately seeking relief.

Today is a milestone. Finally, today we have a chance to open our eyes to reality. Today we have an opportunity to give comfort to the Palestinian people who aspire to have a chance to uphold their dignity, after years of humiliation. I am pleased and honoured, therefore, to participate in this historic meeting of the General Assembly. We have gathered here to correct a historical injustice against the Palestinian people.

We all believe in and cherish the vision of a just, peaceful and harmonious future. For that future, we should all stand together behind the Palestinian bid to become a non-member observer State. It is a moment of truth for all of us. We are all aware that the right of the Palestinians to a State has, unfortunately, been denied for decades. The denial of that right of the Palestinians has no justification on any ground, whether moral, political or legal.

Last year, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, submitted an application for United Nations membership for Palestine (see A/66/PV.19). Unfortunately, the application has been left unanswered by the Security Council. Here comes another chance for us. We call on the international community, the members of this body, to honour their already belated obligation to the Palestinians and to grant them the status of a non-member State. It is high time for all of us to uphold the universal values of justice and dignity. If there is one term that characterizes humankind, it is dignity. One can do without bread, but not without dignity. The struggle of the Palestinian people over the past 65 years has also been about protecting their dignity. They want respect and recognition of their right to determine their fate and future.

We cannot shy away from supporting a fully legitimate demand by the Palestinian people to have a State of their own. If we are to talk about an international order and place our trust in the United Nations system, then the Palestinian flag should fly beside this building. That flag will not only represent an independent Member State among our family of nations. It will represent the fact that we have finally stood together to correct a decades-long injustice to the Palestinian people and the State of Palestine. That is our responsibility to the Palestinian people. Let me be clear. Our vision of justice, international order and human rights will not be achieved until the moment that we actually see the flag of the State of Palestine standing side by side with ours, as a full Member of the United Nations. And that day will come soon.

We have three main reasons to do so. First and foremost, it is a humanitarian and moral obligation on our part. No one can deny the suffering of the Palestinians since the First World War until today. There has always been an excuse for the inhumane treatment of the Palestinian people.

Secondly, it is about the political and historical context. Unfortunately, the negotiation process towards a comprehensive peace on the basis of two States, living side by side in peace, has been put on ice. Instead, we see a deviation, day by day, from the internationally accepted solution that calls for an independent Palestine established with East Jerusalem as its capital inside its 1967 borders. The current status quo is neither sustainable nor acceptable. The recent Israeli attack on Gaza, which resulted in the loss of many innocent civilian lives, was a testimony to that fact. Meanwhile, the continued expansion of the illegal settlements undermines the vision of a two-State solution.

The third aspect concerns our strategic vision for Palestine and for our region. Peace in the Middle East and beyond cannot be achieved without a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue. The deadlock in the negotiations and the current stalemate in the region serve the interest of no one. Supporting the Palestinian bid is about whether we want a lasting peace in the Middle East and beyond. Granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer State at the United Nations will serve as a booster. It will create the long-needed momentum for a negotiated, comprehensive solution, rather than serve as a substitute for it. Our call is for peace, no more and no less.

We need to address the issue in a constructive and unbiased manner. It requires wisdom, prudence and vision to no longer deny the prospect of peace and stability in the region. It obliges us to listen to the call for relief and justice for the Palestinian people, to which we have turned a deaf ear so far.

I would also like to address certain misguided efforts aimed at stopping the Palestinians from winning statehood at the United Nations. The argument that the Palestinians must resume negotiations before getting statehood is superficial. We regret to see that there have also been efforts to deter the Palestinians in their bid at the United Nations, as well as efforts to dissuade United Nations Members from supporting that bid. We have often heard, "Now is not the right time", as was the case when President Abbas submitted the Palestinian bid for membership to the Secretary-General.

For some, the timing was also not right when the late President Arafat read out the Palestinian declaration of independence on 15 November 1988. One can trace the argument back to when the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), on the partition, on this very date in 1947. So let me ask bluntly: If not now, when? When will it be the right time for the Palestinians to achieve their right to statehood, if not today?

The current stalemate in the peace process can no longer be used as a pretext to undermine the Palestinian bid for becoming an internationally recognized State. The recognition of Palestinian statehood is not an option but a moral, political, strategic and legal obligation for the international community. And I want to address and salute all Palestinians from Al-Khalil to Bethlehem, from Jenin to Ariha, from Ramallah to Khan Yunis, from Jerusalem — Al Quds Al-Sharif — to Gaza.

Turkey will stand by the Palestinians forever. They are not alone, and we will not abandon them. We will stand by them until there is a free and independent Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, now and forever. I call on all United Nations Members to fulfil their long overdue responsibility towards the Palestinians. I call on them to fulfil a long overdue promise, made with the General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947.

Draft resolution A/67/L.28, on which members will be voting shortly, will be only an initial step in the right direction to bring some relief to the entire Palestinian nation. Now is the moment of truth. It is time to defend the basic right of the Palestinians to statehood. The flag of Palestine should rise in this Assembly next to ours. The State of Palestine must be moved from the shade and given its rightful place in the sun forever.

The President: Before proceeding to consider draft resolution A/67/L.28, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations", allow me to make a few remarks in my capacity as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

During the course of this meeting, we have had the distinct privilege of hearing from the representatives of two great nations, President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine and Ambassador Ron Prosor of the State of Israel. They are each children of Abraham — one a descendant of Ishmael, the other of Isaac. Both come from a land that has been almost continuously tormented by conflict over many centuries, with countless victims on all sides. The strife has not abated during the 67 years of the Organization's existence, despite the fact that it came into being to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Notwithstanding the valiant efforts of some of the greatest statesmen of the twentieth century, a negotiated, comprehensive settlement enabling Israel and Palestine to live side by side, in peace and security, has yet to materialize. And so we continue to witness enmity, estrangement and mistrust as parents continue to bury their children.

In today's globalized, interconnected world what happens between the River Jordan and the shores of the Mediterranean has become the key to the security and well-being of all humankind.

I have no doubt that history will judge this day to have been fraught with significance. But whether it will come to be looked upon as a step in the right direction on the road to peace will depend upon how we bear ourselves in its wake. Let us therefore find the wisdom to act in furtherance of the goal that we all share.

In coming to the end of my remarks, allow me to extend an appeal from this rostrum to all memberes, in particular to my dear friends from Palestine and Israel, to work for peace, to negotiate in good faith and, ultimately, to succeed in reaching the historical settlement. That is our common and most solemn duty to the entire world, but first and foremost to the proud men and women who live in a land that is holy to so many of us.

In the Zohar it is written that "God is peace, his name is peace, and all is bound together in peace." And in the Holy Koran we read that "Allah invites [all] to the abode of peace and guides whom he pleases onto the right path" (*The Holy Koran, X:25*).

In a few moments, I will ask members to cast their ballots as they see fit. I am sure that each member will

do so with a veritable feeling in their hearts that their choice is serving the cause of a righteous peace.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.28, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". I give the floor to Under-Secretary-General Graisse.

Mr. Graisse: (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/67/L.28, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Angola, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belize, Grenada, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, the Niger, Sri Lanka, Suriname and Viet Nam.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Panama, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Estonia, Fiji, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/67/L.28 was adopted by 138 votes to 9, with 41 abstentions (resolution 67/19).

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: An important vote has taken place today in the General Assembly. The decision by the General Assembly to accord Palestine non-member State status in the United Nations was a prerogative of the Member States. I stand ready to fulfil my role and report to the Assembly as requested in resolution 67/19.

My position has been consistent all along. I believe that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to their own independent State. I believe that Israel has the right to live in peace and security with its neighbours. There is no substitute for negotiations to that end.

Today's vote underscores the urgency of a resumption of meaningful negotiations. We must give a new impetus to our collective efforts to ensure that an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine lives side by side with a secure State of Israel. I urge the parties to renew their commitment to a negotiated peace. I count on all concerned to act responsibly, preserve the achievements in Palestinian State-building under the leadership of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, and

intensify efforts towards reconciliation and the just and lasting peace that remains our shared goal and priority.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

We shall now proceed to explanations of vote. I should like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): For decades, the United States has worked to help achieve a comprehensive end to the long and tragic Arab-Israeli conflict. We have always been clear that only through direct negotiations between the parties can the Palestinians and Israelis achieve the peace that both deserve — two States for two peoples, with a sovereign, viable and independent Palestine living side by side in peace and security with a Jewish and democratic Israel.

That remains our goal, and we therefore measure any proposed action against that clear yardstick. Will it bring the parties closer to peace or push them further apart? Will it help Israelis and Palestinians return to negotiations or hinder their efforts to reach a mutually acceptable agreement? Today's unfortunate and counterproductive resolution 67/19 places further obstacles in the path to peace. That is why the United States voted against it.

The backers of today's resolution say they seek a functioning, independent Palestinian State at peace with Israel. So do we. But we have long been clear that the only way to establish such a Palestinian State and resolve all permanent status issues is through the crucial, if painful work of direct negotiations between the parties. That is not just a bedrock commitment of the United States. Israel and the Palestinians have repeatedly affirmed their own obligations under existing agreements to resolve all issues through direct negotiations, which have been endorsed frequently by the international community. The United States agrees — strongly.

Today's grand pronouncements will soon fade, and the Palestinian people will wake up tomorrow and find that little about their lives has changed, save that the prospects of a durable peace have only receded. The United States therefore calls upon both parties to resume direct talks without preconditions on all the issues that divide them, and we pledge that the United States will be there to support the parties vigorously in such efforts. The United States will continue — in the region, in New York, and elsewhere — to urge all parties to avoid any further provocative actions. We will continue to firmly oppose any and all unilateral actions in international bodies or treaties that circumvent or prejudge the very outcomes that can only be negotiated, including Palestinian statehood, and we will continue to stand up to every effort that seeks to delegitimize Israel or undermine its security.

Progress towards a just and lasting two-State solution cannot be made by pressing a green voting button here in this Hall, nor does adopting any resolution create a State where none indeed exists or change the reality on the ground. For that reason, today's voting should not be misconstrued by any as constituting eligibility for United Nations membership. It does not. The resolution does not establish that Palestine is a State.

The United States believes that the current resolution should not and cannot be read as establishing terms of reference. In many respects, the resolution prejudges the very issues it says are to be resolved through negotiation, particularly with respect to territory. At the same time, it virtually ignores other core questions, such as security, that must be solved for any viable agreement to be achieved. President Obama has been clear in stating what the United States believes is a realistic basis for successful negotiations, and we will continue to base our efforts on that approach.

The recent conflict in Gaza is just the latest reminder that the absence of peace risks the presence of war. We urge those who share our hopes for peace between a sovereign Palestine and a secure Israel to join us in supporting negotiations and not to encourage further distractions. There simply are no short cuts. Long after the votes have been cast, long after the speeches have been forgotten, it is the Palestinians and the Israelis who must still talk to each other — and listen to each other — and find a way to live side by side in the land they share.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): In voting today for the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State of the Organization, France has voted in favour of the two-State solution, of two States for two peoples, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders; we have voted in favour of a solution that we had advocated before the entire international community rallied to it — in favour of a solution today

threatened by the impasse in the peace process. It is a clear-sighted and coherent choice.

As early as 1982, before the Knesset in Jerusalem, President Mitterrand called for the creation of a Palestinian State. Since then, France has spared no effort to promote that solution. Following in that tradition, President François Hollande undertook in 2012 to support international recognition of the Palestinian State.

France could not miss that rendezvous, which is a new phase in moving towards the two-State solution. France could not fail to hear the appeal of President Abbas for the resumption of a credible peace process; just days after the new explosion of violence between Israel and Gaza, we could not fail to lend our full support to the peace partners as those espousing armed struggle endeavoured to win the day.

The Palestinian move comes at a difficult moment, and the repercussions could be serious. But France calls on all the parties to understand and acknowledge its major significance, and to respond by resuming negotiations, not with reprisals that help no one but extremists. France also calls on the international community — Americans, Europeans and Arabs — to mobilize in order to contribute to that end.

France also appeals to the Palestinians to build on this political success in order to contribute to future peace. That means, first, continuing to fight terrorism and to do everything possible to end the all-too-frequent attacks against Israel; to move forward, on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization commitments, towards inter-Palestinian reconciliation, without which the two-State solution is a mere mirage; above all, to return to the negotiating table immediately and without preconditions; and, finally, to avoid launching a cycle of sterile confrontations in international bodies. For the hardest part is before us and them.

This vision of two States for two peoples must become a reality. The international recognition that the Assembly has today given the proposed Palestinian State can become fact only through an agreement based on negotiations between the two parties on all final status issues, within the framework of a fair and comprehensive peace settlement that responds to Israel and Palestine's legitimate aspirations. That is a challenge not only for the two Governments and peoples, but for the international community as well. France is ready to meet it as a friend of Israel and of Palestine.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): My delegation supports the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. That is why Singapore supported resolutions 66/17 and 66/18 of 30 November 2011. However, we abstained in the voting on today's resolution 67/19 because we believe that only a negotiated settlement consistent with Security Council resolution 242 (1967) can provide the basis for a viable, long-term solution. Both sides have legitimate rights and shared responsibilities, and must be prepared to make compromises to achieve the larger good of a lasting peace.

It is precisely because the rights and responsibilities of both sides are inextricably intertwined that no unilateral move can result in a just, peaceful and durable outcome. Palestine's attempt to upgrade its status in the United Nations to that of a non-member observer State should be viewed in the context of its efforts last year to obtain full United Nations membership. Its aspirations are not helped, because the facts on the ground will not be changed.

Singapore hopes that Israel and Palestine will resume negotiations. Singapore will continue to support all international efforts to facilitate a negotiated solution that will be in the long-term interests of Palestine, Israel and the region as a whole.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We join the international community in welcoming the cessation of attacks on Gaza and southern Israel. We deeply regret the loss of life and the damage caused on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. We hope that both sides will uphold the latest ceasefire and immediately address any humanitarian issues that have resulted from the violence.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is gravely concerned about the dangerous impasse in the peace process over the past two years. We believe that the window onto a two-State solution is rapidly closing. Our central objective is to achieve a return to credible negotiations in order to secure a two-State solution. That is the guiding principle that determined how we voted on resolution 67/19 today.

In support of that objective, we sought a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to return

immediately to negotiations, without preconditions. That was the single most important factor shaping our vote. We also sought an assurance from the Palestinians that they would not pursue immediate action in United Nations agencies and the International Criminal Court, since that would make a swift return to negotiations impossible. We are in no doubt that President Abbas is a courageous man of peace, and we have engaged intensively with the Palestinians ahead of today's voting to try to secure those assurances. But in their absence, we were not able to vote in favour of the resolution, and we therefore abstained.

Our priority now is to restart negotiations. We urge all parties, including Israel, to avoid taking steps in response to today's events that could damage the peace process. Palestine will be a non-member observer State in the United Nations from this date onward, but that does not change the situation on the ground. The only way to give the Palestinian people the State that they need and deserve, and to give the Israeli people the security and peace they are entitled to, is through a negotiated two-State solution. We look to the United States, with the strong and active support of the United Kingdom and the international community, to do all it can in the coming weeks and months to take a decisive lead in restarting negotiations, and we look to the Israelis and Palestinians to be ready to enter into such talks.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Germany firmly believes in two States, Israel and Palestine, for two peoples in the Middle East. We share the goal of a Palestinian State. Germany has worked towards that end for years, mainly through its support for the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority. Yet it must be clear to everybody that a Palestinian State can be achieved only through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

We believe that there is reason to doubt whether the step taken today is helpful to the peace process at this point in time. We are concerned that it might lead to further hardening of positions instead of improving the chances of reaching a two-State solution through direct negotiations.

It is our expectation that the Palestinian leadership will not take unilateral steps on the basis of today's resolution 67/19 that could deepen the conflict and move us further away from a peaceful settlement. We call on both sides to engage in serious negotiations, without conditions or further delay. Parties must refrain from any action that undermines the prospects of negotiations and the objective of a two-State solution.

Germany explicitly welcomes the fact that the resolution adopted today calls for a two-State solution, and hence fully recognizes the right of Israel to exist in peace. I repeat that Israel's legitimate security concerns must be addressed in a credible manner or the peace process will remain stalled. Germany will do its utmost to support all efforts aimed at paving the way for a genuine negotiating process. That can be achieved only with a demonstration of the necessary political will on both sides and the active commitment of the international community, including the Quartet and regional actors.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland's decision to vote in favour of resolution 67/19, adopted today by the General Assembly, was motivated by our desire to resolve the current stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and to relaunch the peace process. We believe that Palestine's elevation to observer State status within the United Nations will revive the concept of a two-State solution in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. In that respect, we endorse the peace efforts of the international community, calling for a solution with two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The resolution recalls the importance of resolutions adopted in the past, notably, resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, concerning the creation of an Arab State and a Jewish State, and resolution 43/177, of 15 December 1988, which acknowledges the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on the Arab nature of one State and the Jewish nature of the other. The resolution just adopted refers to Jerusalem as the capital of the two States. In the light of these formulations, among others, we see the resolution as an appeal for the resumption of direct negotiations and as the keystone supporting a two-State solution, the prospects of which are fading.

The elevation of Palestine to the status of a United Nations observer State endows Palestine not only with rights but also with obligations, in particular that of refraining from the threat or use of force as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It also opens the door to several international conventions, particularly those on the protection of human rights and the fight against terrorism.

This decision does not involve a bilateral recognition of a Palestinian State, which will depend on future peace negotiations.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union in this debate, and wishes to make the following observations.

Today's vote is a significant step towards the creation of a State of Palestine, which we all look forward to. But Belgium believes that true progress will be made when the Palestinians will be able to benefit on the ground from the existence of a future State that has the necessary institutions, personnel and tools to function properly. Belgium fully shares the goal of resolution 67/19 just adopted — a two-State solution, with Israel living side by side in peace and security with a future State of Palestine that is democratic, viable and sustainable. The two-State solution is in fact the only possible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and every effort must be engaged to that end.

For Belgium, the resolution adopted today by the General Assembly does not yet constitute a recognition of a State in the full sense. The establishment of a fully legal State must result from negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. In our view, there is no alternative to negotiations, however difficult they might be. Priority must therefore be given to a rapid resumption of peace talks. In this context, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority must abstain from any unilateral act that could undermine the credibility of the peace process.

With its European partners, Belgium calls on all the parties and all the stakeholders involved to start work immediately on resolving the conflict. We are determined to cooperate actively with the United States on an initiative that would establish parameters for the negotiation process and offer enough guarantees and incentives for both parties. The voting today was a clear sign that the peace process must be accelerated. A rapid and unconditional resumption of negotiations is necessary. What must be done at all costs is to bring the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators together at the table.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria): Bulgaria subscribes to the declaration on the Middle East peace process and the statement to be made shortly on behalf of the European Union. Allow me in my national capacity to present a brief explanation of our vote.

My delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 67/19 after careful analysis. We do not expect the resolution to change the reality on the ground between Israel and Palestine, or to speed up a negotiated two-State solution. Our understanding is that the adoption of the resolution giving Palestine non-member observer status in the United Nations should in no way prejudice the process of direct negotiations. Therefore, we call for their immediate resumption without preconditions. These talks, based on the Quartet principles, existing agreements and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, continue to be the only sustainable way to achieve the establishment of a sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living in peace and security alongside Israel.

Bulgaria consistently supports the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people pertaining to their right to self-determination. My country was among the first to recognize the State of Palestine back in 1988. Just as the Jewish people have a homeland in the State of Israel, the Palestinian people have the right to an independent State of Palestine.

On the bilateral level, Bulgaria has built and continues to develop close and friendly relations with both Palestine and Israel. Our main concern, however, is the possible adverse impact of the resolution on the prospect for an early resumption of negotiations. In view of the critical situation in the region and the international context in which the resolution was moved forward, we have serious doubts as to whether it will further advance the peace process.

We have continually stressed the fact that unilateral actions by either side are counterproductive and threaten the ultimate viability of the two-State solution. Bulgaria calls on the parties to refrain from any such actions, both bilaterally and in international settings, that could be detrimental to the peace process. We also appeal to them to work in good faith towards a negotiated settlement and to abide by their publicly undertaken commitments.

The critical situation in Gaza and southern Israel makes the immediate renewal of the peace efforts more pressing and urgent than ever. Bulgaria greatly appreciates the diplomatic efforts made by Egypt, the United States and the Secretary-General, which have led to the current ceasefire and encouraged hopes for a resumption of the peace process.

Mr. Starčević (Serbia): First of all, I want to warmly congratulate Palestine on achieving the status of non-member observer State in the United Nations. This is an important step in the long — and I would say far too long — journey towards the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to statehood. For the 132 Members of the United Nations that have so far recognized the State of Palestine, it is a sign that their support for the Palestinian cause is bringing results and strengthening the Palestinians' right to their self-determination and an independent State.

Like Yugoslavia before it, Serbia is among those 132 Member States. Our support for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and independence has never wavered. It is based on our own sense of justice and on the solid foundation of a number of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, reaching all the way back to the beginnings of the United Nations — all of them reaffirming the right of Palestinians to an independent and sovereign State of their own, based on the two-State solution.

Unlike Yugoslavia from 1967 to 1992, Serbia has had diplomatic relations with Israel and maintains good and friendly cooperation with that State. We are therefore fully conscious of Israel's legitimate security concerns and have an interest in promoting such a solution, which would bring about statehood for Palestine and security and peace for both Israel and Palestine. Neither a nation whose people was a victim of the Holocaust nor a nation still in quest for its statehood deserves to live in the same precarious state lasting for more than 60 years. The people of both States are weary of conflict; they should not be made to wait any longer for it to end. We must never accept the cynical view that the conflict can not be resolved and that the world must simply live with it.

The Middle East peace process negotiations should be urgently resumed and accelerated so that a peace agreement based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative can be reached. In the meantime, let us hope and let us act in such a way that the present ceasefire holds. The people of both States have a vested interest in that, even if their hawks try to create a different impression.

Ms. Flores (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we voted today in favour of resolution 67/19 on the status of Palestine in the United Nations, the Government of Honduras could not help but recall the motives that led our peoples to establish this extraordinary Organization — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of nations large and small. The ultimate lodestar of the United Nations is that, to achieve peace, we must practice tolerance and live together as good neighbours.

Honduras firmly supports a solution between the two States, Israel and Palestine. The Honduran people deeply share the inalienable desire of the peoples of the Middle East for peace. Our decision to vote in favour of granting Palestine non-member observer status in the United Nations was based on our fervent wish to contribute to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that we believe should be based on the right to self-determination of both the Jewish and Palestinian people, the need for mutual recognition between the States of Israel and Palestine, the rights of Israel and Palestine to their own territory and to live in peace within stable and safe borders, and the need for a comprehensive, directly negotiated solution to all the remaining differences between both parties.

Honduras understands that today's voting neither attempts to make decisions nor claims that the international community should multilaterally make decisions that rightfully belong only to Israel and Palestine. On the basis of our own national experience, we know that peace cannot be imposed from outside, but can arise only from the people themselves. Recognition of Palestine and Israel by third parties cannot achieve peace between those two nations. To achieve a two-State solution and to benefit both peoples, there must be direct negotiations and understandings between them. Still, our recognition of both States aims to send an unambiguous signal of respect from Honduras to both peoples, whom we would fervently like to see coexist in peace. We know well that in the end what will seal a definitive peace between those nations is their mutual recognition of the right to self-determination and their right to exist as States, rather than any resolution of the international community.

In voting for the resolution, Honduras takes no position on the territorial and border claims of the parties, since we also know from the lessons of our own experience that such matters should not be a matter for political pronouncement by third parties. Such intervention not only exceeds our authority as third

parties and our legitimate interest, but makes it more difficult to resolve disputes and hardens positions. It is a very different matter when an impartial third party — acting on their behalf within the framework of good offices or through a process of mediation, arbitration or judicial procedure — is charged by the parties with finding a peaceful solution to their differences.

The same applies to the separate but delicate issues that remain open to negotiation or understanding. The solution to those matters lies in direct negotiation between the parties. It is therefore vital for Israel and Palestine to return to the negotiating table and to focus on finding formulas to address the concerns between them, including security. The international community should support those efforts and remain ready to facilitate and support them in every constructive way possible.

Today's vote recognizing Palestine's non-member observer status in the United Nations should be construed not as representing a victory for one side or defeat for the other, but rather as the expression of the ardent desire of the United Nations for concord and progress to reign in the Middle East. Honduras calls for moderation and for the rights and privileges that Palestine was granted as a non-member observer State in the United Nations to be used to open new avenues of direct understanding and to draw closer to the ultimate goal of the resolution, which is peaceful coexistence and solidarity among peoples and nations.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): On this very day 65 years ago in this Assembly (see A/PV.128), Denmark voted in favour of the establishment of two States in the former mandate of Palestine. Today, by voting in favour of resolution 67/19, we reaffirmed our commitment to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security — a commitment we share with the rest of the European Union.

Denmark has consistently stood by Israel and its inherent right to self-defence in accordance with international law. We have also supported the Palestinian right to statehood and the building of the Palestinian Authority. That achievement deserves our full acknowledgment, and we will continue to building the institutions of a sovereign State of Palestine. In that regard, Denmark calls on all Palestinians to support President Abbas in his efforts to promote inter-Palestinian reconciliation as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian State.

While we welcome last week's ceasefire agreement, the sudden escalation of conflict in Gaza highlighted the urgent need to move forward a comprehensive solution to the conflict. We strongly appeal to both sides to build on today's decision and to resume direct, bilateral negotiations immediately and without conditions on all final status issues, respecting previous agreements and understandings. Only a political solution to the conflict can bring about lasting security. At the same time, we also appeal to the parties to refrain from taking any steps that could negatively affect the situation and efforts towards a negotiated solution. The time to heed the call made in resolution 181 (II), adopted 65 years ago, for creating two States, is long overdue.

The resolution adopted, henceforth according Palestine the status of a non-member observer State in the General Assembly, is a natural continuation of our firm support for a two-State solution and for Palestinian State-building. Our vote, however, does not imply formal bilateral recognition of a sovereign Palestinian State. That is a separate question that we will continue to consider within a framework established by international law.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): In accordance with the long-standing position of the European Union, Italy is strongly committed to a comprehensive negotiated peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as being in the fundamental interests of the European Union as well as of the parties in the region. Our strong support for Palestinian State-building efforts and our excellent bilateral relations with both parties are grounded in the firm conviction that a comprehensive peace must and can be achieved on the basis of a two-State solution with the State of Israel and a sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, both living within agreed borders and enjoying peace and security. Italy stands by its conviction that such an agreement can be reached only through bilateral negotiations, and strongly supports the European Union's call on all parties to pursue actions conducive to an environment with the confidence necessary to ensure meaningful negotiations, and to refrain from actions that undermine the credibility of the process.

Italy decided to vote in favour of resolution 67/19. We took that decision in the light of the information we received from President Abbas on the constructive approach he intends to take after this vote. I refer in

particular to his readiness to resume direct negotiations without preconditions and to refrain from seeking membership in other specialized agencies in the current circumstances, or pursuing the possibility of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. With regard to the latter, Italy would not accept instrumental actions intended to question Israel's inalienable right to defend itself or to have recourse to measures necessary to protect the lives of its citizens. We also wish to underline our firm conviction that the new status of the Palestinian Authority should not, under any circumstances, be applied retroactively. Italy stresses that today's vote in no way prejudges its commitment to a comprehensive negotiated peace settlement, which remains the only possible path to Palestinian Statehood and full United Nations membership.

I would like to conclude by restating Italy's unwavering support for a negotiated two-State solution, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Mitsialis (Greece): Greece's vote in favour of resolution 67/19, on upgrading Palestine's status to that of a non-member observer State, was guided by our long-standing position of principle that the resolution of the Middle East question should be based on two States, an independent and viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel. It is our firm belief that that is the only solution assuring the long-term interests of the two peoples, as well as peace and stability in the region, and it is therefore the duty of the international community to safeguard it.

Paragraph 5 of the resolution contains an important provision. Greece believes that the inalienable and non-negotiable right of the Palestinian people to statehood can be fulfilled through a results-oriented peace process and direct negotiations between the two parties on all final status issues. A comprehensive settlement, by definition, includes the safeguarding of the inherent right of the State of Israel to peace and security. By voting in favour of this resolution, Greece believes that it contributes towards a resumption of the peace process without preconditions, and to the promotion of a two-State solution. In that regard, we urge the Palestinian side to refrain from unilateral steps, and the Israeli side to refrain from actions on the ground that could jeopardize the viability of such a solution.

Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary): Hungary abstained in the voting on resolution 67/19 based on the following considerations.

Hungary's position on the Middle East peace process, the status of Palestine and the decision made today are based on the fundamental interest of Hungary and the European Union in peace and stability in the region. When we evaluate any initiatives, including today's resolution, we pay attention to all the important factors, including their possible implications for the prospects for a resumption of the Middle East peace process. In that context, we are very concerned about the possible negative consequences that could result from the adoption of today's resolution. Our position on the statehood of Palestine remains valid and leaves no room for a negative consideration of the resolution. It is our firm belief that a settlement of the Middle East conflict must be based on the two-State solution. With that aim, we support the establishment of a sovereign, viable and contiguous State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel, to be implemented through direct negotiations. In line with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the European Union by High Representative Catherine Ashton, we support all efforts to bring about substantive, direct negotiations between the parties in the coming months.

Mr. Sajdik (Austria): Austria would like to express its full support for the positions expressed in the statement of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, earlier today, and for the statement by the observer of the European Union to be delivered later.

Austria's vote in favour of resolution 67/19 is a vote in support of a two-State solution. It is a vote of confidence in the serious efforts of the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Abbas, to build efficient State institutions. It is a call to that leadership to fulfil its commitment to returning to the negotiating table with Israel without further conditions, and a call to both parties to re-enter into negotiations in good faith. Equally, it is a call to the Palestinian people and their political factions to unite behind their leadership's efforts to seek a durable negotiated solution, as stipulated in the resolution.

Mrs. Hrdá (Czech Republic): I would like to reiterate the Czech Republic's support for negotiations leading to Palestine's statehood and all constructive steps to that end. In that regard we continue to

encourage both sides to return to direct talks leading to a negotiated two-State solution without delays or preconditions. On several occasions the Czech Republic has called on all the parties concerned to avoid any step that might interfere with or prejudice the outcome of that process. That is why the Czech Republic voted against resolution 67/19.

The Czech Republic fully supports Palestine's aspirations to statehood through a comprehensive negotiated agreement between the two parties that results in two States, namely, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): Finland voted in favour of resolution 67/19 with the aim of strengthening prospects for a Palestinian State and showing support for the moderate forces that are committed to pursuing that objective through negotiations. We are committed to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

We have witnessed how the Palestinian Authority now has institutions that pass the threshold of what one can expect from a modern State. That achievement deserves our full recognition. Finland will continue to contribute to building the future institutions of a sovereign State of Palestine. We appeal to all sides to build on this decision, to engage in negotiations immediately and without conditions, and to refrain from taking any steps that could negatively affect the situation and the efforts towards a negotiated solution.

Our vote today in favour of the resolution, which accords Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations, is a natural continuation of our firm support for a two-State solution and Palestinian state-building. However, Finland's vote does not imply formal recognition of a sovereign Palestinian State. That is a separate question and we will determine our national position on the matter in accordance with the procedures set out in the Constitution of Finland.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): Australia's decision to abstain in the voting on resolution 67/19 balances our long-standing support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their own State with our concern that the only durable basis for the resolution of this conflict is direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The resolution does not confer statehood; it grants non-member observer State status to the Palestinian Authority in the United Nations. We have long supported a negotiated two-State solution that allows a secure Israel to live alongside an independent future Palestinian State. Australia has concerns that this resolution may actually make it harder rather than easier for the two parties to return to direct negotiations. But our support for a future Palestinian State achieved through negotiations remains steadfast, as does our support for Israel's legitimacy and right to security.

In looking beyond today's vote, we urge all sides to return immediately to negotiations in good faith. It is critical that no party seek to exploit or overreact to the outcome of today's vote, including within the United Nations system, in ways that could undermine prospects for a just and lasting settlement.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand's vote in favour of resolution 67/19 is consistent with our long-held policy on the Palestinian issue and our support for a two-State solution. The resolution supports existing internationally agreed-on parameters for resolving the Israel-Palestine issue. Our vote supports Israel's absolute right to exist, with a vibrant society living in freedom and prosperity, free from fear of attack, not least from Hamas rockets, with that Israeli State living side by side with an independent, contiguous, viable Palestinian State with recognized borders. All that, we know, can be achieved only through a negotiated two-State solution.

The events of the past month have demonstrated President Abbas's capacity as a partner for peace. We underscore our support for him and for Prime Minister Fayyad and others who are working to make a two-State solution viable. We hope that with this decision both sides can now do whatever is required to return to the negotiating table, and that nothing is said or done to impede that return. We also hope that reactions to this vote do not jeopardize progress in Palestinian state-building efforts. The President of the General Assembly was indeed right to speak of all of us being judged by how we bear ourselves after this vote.

Whatever the significance of today's vote, we must now turn to what happens tomorrow. This resolution is a political symbol of the commitment of the United Nations to a two-State solution. New Zealand has cast its vote accordingly based on the assumption that our vote is without prejudice to New Zealand's position on its recognition of Palestine. But resolutions and debates here in New York will not bring about a secure Israel living peacefully alongside a viable, contiguous

Palestinian State. Indeed, it is regrettable that today's decision had to be achieved by a vote at the United Nations and not by direct negotiations. But that is the reality of the situation on the ground, to which many others have referred.

Today, we must therefore mark the beginning of a new dynamic, with the parties immediately and without any preconditions returning to negotiations, before the opportunity of a two-State solution is lost to us all.

Mr. Pedersen (Norway): Norway is a strong supporter of Palestinian rights and aspirations to statehood in accordance with international law. We are committed to continuing to empower Palestinian institutions. The Palestinian Authority has already passed the threshold of a functioning State in key sectors. That was endorsed by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, chaired by Norway, both in 2011 and 2012. We support Palestine's upgraded status in the General Assembly to that of a non-member observer State. That is consistent with our long-standing position on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-State solution. We supported the Partition Plan in the General Assembly in 1947, Israel's admission as a full State Member of the United Nations in 1949, including the declarations made in that context, and we recognized it as a State in the same year.

Resolution 67/19 is based on the two-State solution and the principles therein, and does not prejudge the outcomes of final status negotiations between the parties. Neither does it violate the Oslo Accords. The Palestinians have a legitimate right to take this step, based on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Furthermore, it is time for the General Assembly to recognize the serious efforts the Palestinian Authority has made to build effective State institutions.

Upgrading Palestine's status in the United Nations is not a provocative step. It sends a message that the Palestine Liberation Organization and President Abbas are genuinely committed to a peaceful solution based on diplomatic means. But with rights come responsibilities. It is time for the Palestinians to unite in building a society based on democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The fact that this resolution has broad backing on the Palestinian side is a positive step. Norway is strongly committed to the two-State solution with a sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and within secure and recognized borders. Only a negotiated solution between the parties can bring about lasting peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis. We appeal to both sides to build on today's decision in a constructive manner and urgently resume comprehensive final status negotiations.

Our support of an upgraded status for Palestine in the United Nations does not prejudge the question of recognition. The national procedures to formally recognize the State of Palestine are still pending.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.